

03.08.2017 — Review

## Lindsey Bull and Plastique Fantastique

Castlefield Gallery, Manchester  
*by Nathalie Mayer*

Lindsey Bull and Plastique Fantastique installation view courtesy Castlefield Gallery. Photography by Joanne Eames.

Comprising separate works created around the shared theme of ritual and myth, the exhibition *Lindsey Bull and Plastique Fantastique* at Manchester's Castlefield Gallery is an experiential collection spanning two floors.

While Bull's work remains physically two-dimensional as oils on canvas, Plastique Fantastique utilise a range of media in their approach to the subject.

Laser cut Perspex pieces, large plywood tarot card sculptures and video projections cover the room. Each one holding visual and physical reference to the character of the Hanging Man, the trickster of tarot cards that can be both a figure of suffering or a being beyond gravity depending on the rotation of his card. Having investigated 'meme culture' the group consider him to be the original 'traitor meme', a character that can be understood entirely differently when turned on his toe, with the capacity to disorient and deceive. As though to reinforce this idea, the word 'traitor' beats a rhythm throughout the gallery as the audio-visual installation at the heart of the exhibition echoes through the building. Adorning the tarot card sculptures that lean against the gallery walls are digital patterns and drawn characters layered over photographs of the group members' hanging bodies. The knots and nooses of rope that weave their way around them allude to the restriction and discomfort of the suspension to come.

Equally as confounding and intriguing are the female figures of Bull's 'Undergrowth' (2017) paintings who stare hauntingly from the canvas. In glamorous dresses and fashion magazine poses their presence among the fertile woodland that surrounds them is unexplained. At times alone but often in pairs, their blank yet confronting expressions evoke the feeling that these defiant apparitions have been displaced from another time or place. The integration of these two very different approaches to narrative create a discourse that further promotes the sense of witchcraft or otherworldliness. Bull's portraits provide islands of calm amongst the projections and sound, allowing the audience to become lost in the world that she creates and take time to consider its meaning.

On the exhibition's preview evening *Plastique Fantastique* enacted a performance piece in which they attempted to summon a 'traitor meme' through ritual. The remnants of this event still litter the floor in the lower gallery space as a scattered pool of pink glitter and discarded ribbons. Their enduring presence leads the audience to consider and speculate upon the events of that night, further adding to the mystery of the space.

The culmination of the exhibition is a large-scale video projection. It is the source of the enduring 'traitor' chant heard throughout; a multi-faceted layering of ideas, much like the tarot cards. The basic themes are apparent; ritual, The Hanging Man, memes and traitors but there are no clear answers as to the intended outcome. It seems that much like Bull's paintings, the artists' intention is for the audience to draw their own conclusions; the how, the why.

The environment of myth and ritual has been created for you and the onus is on the audience to decipher the rest.

*Lindsey Bull and Plastique Fantastique*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester.

23 June – 6 August 2017.

Nathalie Mayer is an artist and writer based in Yorkshire.



Castlefield Gallery 38

Manchester 192

Lindsey Bull 1

Painting 2

performance 17

Plastique Fantastique 2

Ritual 2

sculpture 38

Tarot 1

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